

# LESSON 1 - TO GO OR NOT TO GO



## ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What combination of factors both natural and manmade is necessary for healthy river restoration and how does this enhance the sustainability of natural and human communities?

## GUIDING QUESTION:

What hardships and rewards were involved in maintaining a sustainable homestead?

## LESSON OVERVIEW:

To introduce the Homestead Era of United States history, students will read a summary of the Homestead Act of 1862.

Through classroom discussion the conditions required to “prove up” a homestead will be listed. Students will be given a scenario and an 1870 catalogue to complete a graphic organizer to decide if they would make the move west. They will write a short essay of their decision.

## TIME NEEDED:

One 45-50 minute class period

## MATERIALS:

- **Summary of the Homestead Act of 1862**
- **1870 Catalogue**
- Graphic Organizer:
  - **“What to Take”**
  - **“What to Take” teacher master**
- Pencil and paper to create a journal

## PROCEDURES:

1. Using classroom discussion and brainstorming introduce the concepts of westward expansion and decision making.
2. Have each student read the summary of the Homestead Act of 1862. Make a list of what was needed to “prove up” a homestead.

1. File an application
2. Improve the land (12 x 14 dwelling and grow crops)
3. File for the deed

Conditions

1. Could not bare arms against the United States
  2. Had to live on the land for five years
3. Present the scenario found on the graphic organizer “What to Take”.

Year: 1880, Method of travel: Wagon pulled by livestock, Status: Married Funds: \$1,000.00 Home state: any east of the Mississippi River, Background information: Oxen are preferred over horses or mules because they are hardier for the harsh conditions. If the weather is dry, expect to travel 20 miles per day, if wet, 10 miles or less per day.

4. Have students use the 1870 Catalogue to complete the graphic organizer.
5. Have students create a journal or notebook for use during entire unit. Students will write a one to two paragraph essay in their journal on their decision of whether or not to attempt the trip to Washington State. Have them include what they think might happen on the trip, how far they could travel per day, and how long it might take them. They should also include their decision and their reasons for going or not going.

If the student decided not to go, the essay should include their reasons why they are not going and what they will do with their money. They should make up an occupation and where they live.

### **ASSESSMENTS:**

- Completion of the graphic organizer and the essay from journal. The essay should clearly state if the student has decided to go or not to go to Washington state and why or why not. If going, the essay should include how much money they have decided to spend to get ready to go, how much they will spend while on the trip and how much they think they will need once they get to Washington. They should also include how far they expect to travel in one day (20 miles, if dry, 10 miles, if raining). Typically, the trip required four months to complete. If the student decided not to go, the essay should include their reasons why they are not going and what they will do with their money. **Additional Resources and Enrichment:**

### **WASHINGTON STATE STANDARDS:**

#### **SOCIAL STUDIES:**

1. **EALR 2: ECONOMICS** - The student applies understanding of economic concepts and systems to analyze decision-making and the interactions between individuals, households, businesses, governments, and societies.
  - **Component 2.1:** Understands that people have to make choices between wants and needs and evaluate the outcomes of those choices.

#### **VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS:**

- **Westward expansion**

## SUMMARY OF THE HOMESTEAD ACT OF 1862

### BACKGROUND

With the secession of Southern states from the Union and therefore removal of the slavery issue, in 1862, the Homestead Act was passed and signed into law. The new law established a three-fold homestead acquisition process: filing an application, improving the land, and filing for deed of title. Any U.S. citizen, or intended citizen, who had never borne arms against the U.S. Government could file an application and lay claim to 160 acres of surveyed Government land. For the next 5 years, the homesteader had to live on the land and improve it by building a 12-by-14 dwelling and growing crops. After 5 years, the homesteader could file for his patent (or deed of title) by submitting proof of residency and the required improvements to a local land office.

Local land offices forwarded the paperwork to the General Land Office in Washington, DC, along with a final certificate of eligibility. The case file was examined, and valid claims were granted patent to the land free and clear, except for a small registration fee. Title could also be acquired after a 6-month residency and trivial improvements, provided the claimant paid the government \$1.25 per acre. After the Civil War, Union soldiers could deduct the time they served from the residency requirements.

Physical conditions on the frontier presented even greater challenges. Wind, blizzards, and plagues of insects threatened crops. Open plains meant few trees for building, forcing many to build homes out of sod. Limited fuel and water supplies could turn simple cooking and heating chores into difficult trials. Ironically, even the smaller size of sections took its own toll. While 160 acres may have been sufficient for an eastern farmer, it was simply not enough to sustain agriculture on the dry plains, and scarce natural vegetation made raising livestock on the prairie difficult. As a result, in many areas, the original homesteader did not stay on the land long enough to fulfill the claim. In other areas, like the Pacific Northwest, to clear the land, huge trees had to be chopped down. Soil was poor and typical crops would not grow in the thin soil.

However, homesteaders who persevered were rewarded with opportunities as rapid changes in transportation eased some of the hardships. Six months after the Homestead Act was passed, the Railroad Act was signed, and by May 1869, a transcontinental railroad stretched across the frontier. The new railroads provided easy transportation for homesteaders, and new immigrants were lured westward by railroad companies eager to

sell off excess land at inflated prices. The new rail lines provided ready access to manufactured goods and catalog houses like Montgomery Ward offered farm tools, barbed wire, linens, weapons, and even houses delivered via the rails.

Many pioneers populated the land, building towns and schools and creating new states from the territories. In many cases, the schools became the focal point for community life, serving as churches, polling places and social gathering locations.

1870 Catalogue of Goods				
<i>Food Prices</i>			<i>Horses, cattle &amp; gear</i>	.
Wheat per bushel	\$1.02		Horse, average work horse	\$150
Flour per barrel	\$3.00		Horse, good saddle horse	\$200
Corn per bushel	40 cents			.
Molasses, gallon	15 cents		Saddle	\$30
Mess pork per barrel	\$9		cowboy saddle	\$60
Mess beef per barrel	\$8		Harness	\$50
Lard per pound	6 cents			.
Butter per pound	15 cents		Yoke of two oxen	\$150
Sugar per pound	7 cents		heifer	\$18.75
1Cheese per pound	5 cents		cow	\$26
Rice per pound	5 cents		bull	\$90
oranges	\$.50/dozen		3 year old steer	\$62
dried figs	\$.20/pound		2 year old steer	\$22.50
dried apples	\$.10/pound		yearlings	\$12.50
dried apricots	\$.15/pound		calves	\$2.50

dried peaches	\$.12/pound		.
fresh peaches	3 for \$.10	Buggy	\$75
fresh apples	2 for \$.05	Wagon	\$65
sugar	\$.10/pound		.
flour	\$.04/pound	<b><i>Weapons and Ammunition</i></b>	.
coffee	\$.12/pound		.
.		Pearl-handled matched set of Colt .45 Peacemakers with holsters	\$100
<b><i>Home and farm costs</i></b>		Classic Peacemaker	\$17.00 by mail order
Land	\$5/acre (avg. 160 acres)	cartridges	\$.50 cents/box
Homestead filing fee	\$14	breach loading shot gun	\$60
House -- 32'x40' (4 rooms)	\$700	rifle, single shot muzzle loader, used	\$8
House -- 16'x22' (2 rooms)	\$300	rifle, seven-shot Sharps repeater	\$50
Shanty -- 8'x10' (1 room/dirt floor)	\$25		.
Stable and well	\$150	<b><i>Prices from Montgomery Ward's First Catalogue, 1872</i></b>	.
Plows, cultivators, field equip.	\$325	Gentleman's toilet set, including toothbrush, nail brush, razor, razor strop, lather brush, comb, hair brush	\$1.00

Chairs	\$1.25 each	2 colored undershirts -- (white -- \$1.00)	\$1.25
Bed, bureau and commode	\$15	2 colored drawers -- (white -- \$1.00)	\$1.25
Cookstove	\$25	3 New York Mills white shirts	\$2.50
lantern	\$1.00	6 pairs men's cotton socks	\$1.00
Coal	about \$80/year	6 pairs Army wool socks	\$1.00
Kerosene	\$.15/gallon	7 yards blue denim	\$1.00
.		3 yards plain cassimere [cashmere]	\$1.00
<b>Dry Goods</b>		1 hoop skirt, 1 bustle, & 1 hair braid	\$1.00
calicos	10 cents/yard	1 ladies gold locket, plain	\$1.50
		enameled	\$2.00
bleached cotton	15 cents/yard	1 pair ladies earrings & pin set, imported	\$4.50
brown shirtings	13 cents/yard	1 pair ladies solid gold ear drops	\$3.00
domestic gingham	15 cents/yard	1 plain gold ring (all sizes)	\$2.00
blankets	\$3.00 each	1 silver plated hunting case watch	\$6.00
.	.	1 silk parasol	\$1.00
.		1 heavy plaid shawl	\$3.00



[illegible]

TOTAL			\$65.00	

What to take teacher master			Name	
It is 1880; you and your spouse have decided to move west to the Washington territory. You have a life savings of \$1000 to help you purchase what you need for the move and to acquire some land once you get there. You have items typically found in a household, such as pots and pans, dishes, bedding, some basic tools and a good dog. Use the 1870 Catalogue to make a list of what you think you should take, mark what you will need to buy and tally how much money will be needed. You also have some knowledge about making the trip and know that oxen are preferred over horses to pull a wagon because they are stronger and more durable to be able to survive the harsh conditions. If the weather is dry, you can expect to travel 20 miles per day, if wet (rain or snow) expect 10 miles or less per day. Your assignment is to make a list with total expenses of what you need to make the four month trip to Washington. Remember that you will also need some money once you get there.				
Item	Price	Amount	Sub-total	Notes
Example : Wagon	\$65.00	1	\$65.00	tools for repairs, hammer, pliers, grease
Oxen	\$150.00	1pair	\$150.00	feed, bucket
Harness	\$50.00	2	\$100.00	
Lantern	\$1.00	3	\$ 3.00	
Kerosene	\$0.15	10 gal	\$1.50	
Cookstove	\$25.00	1	\$25.00	possible to use old stove?
Blankets	\$3.00	4	\$12.00	extras could be traded
Flour	\$3.00	1 barrel	\$3.00	
Bacon	\$9.00	1 barrel	\$9.00	
Coffee	\$0.12	20 lbs	\$2.40	
Sugar	\$0.10	40 lbs	\$ 4.00	
*Salt	\$0.05	10 lbs	\$0.50	*not in 1870 Catalogue
cheese	\$0.05	10 lbs	\$0.50	hard to preserve, buy more on trip

dried apples	\$0.10	10 lbs	\$1.00	
corn	\$0.40	2 bushel	\$0.80	for oxen
Rifle	\$50.00	1	\$50.00	
cartridges	\$0.50	10 boxes	\$5.00	
Filing fee	\$14.00	1	\$14.00	needed in WA
plow	\$325.00	1		Purchase at trading post?
<b>TOTAL</b>			\$515.70	